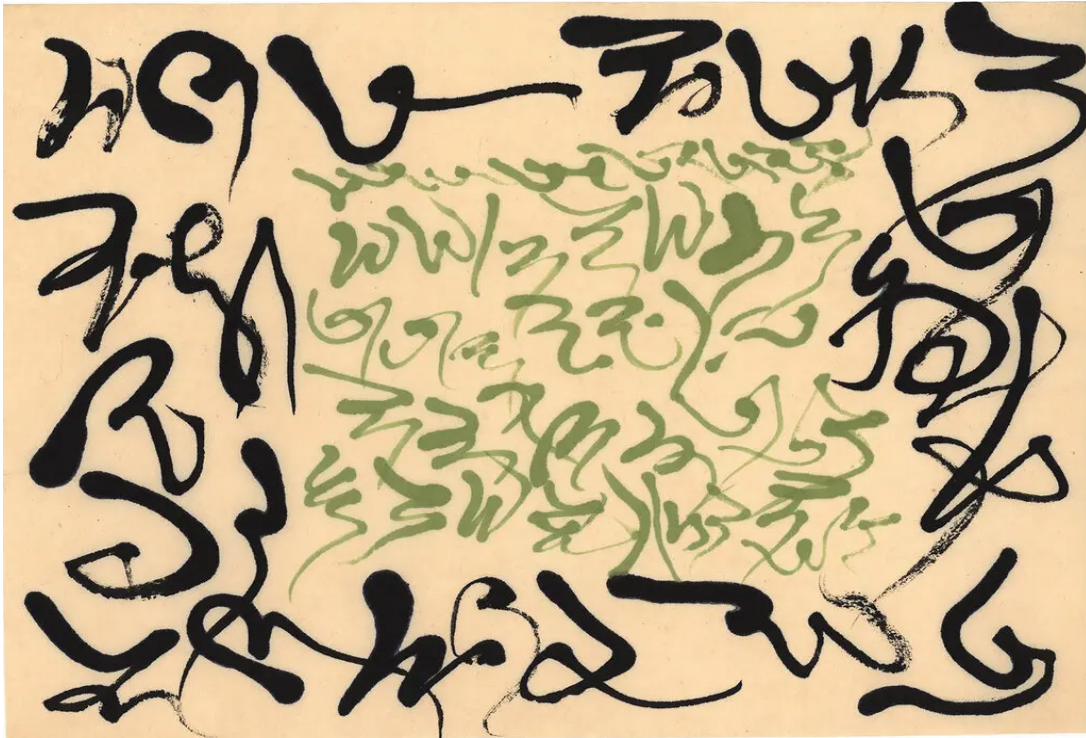


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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in April

By Travis Diehl
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Marian Zazeela's abstract calligraphy "Untitled 63/1," circa 1963. Credit...Marian Zazeela, via Artists Space; Photo by Jung Hee Choi

Marian Zazeela died on March 28 at age 83. A central figure of the New York avant-garde since the 1960s, Zazeela worked with light, paint and sound, often in collaboration with her husband, the minimalist composer La Monte Young. By coincidence (or resonance), a show at Artists Space called "Dream Lines" provides a rare concentrated view of her delicate and deep abstract calligraphy.

Moving clockwise around the gallery, you can see her technique grow. In pieces from 1962 and 1963, blocks of flared squiggles recall the holy pictorial lettering of Islam, ornamental strokes molded into bold shapes and replete with magnetic detail. The early drawings have the casual flair of studies. Pencil sketches underpin the compositions. One example, a rectangular congregation of serpentine blots, is inked on a paper towel.

By the late 1960s (one imagines, with devotional practice), Zazeela's marks are so saturated and clean that they don't feel drawn so much as placed. The lines curl into dense molars and concise arabesques, like visual mantras, repeated to form airy mandalas. The most seductive pieces include designs in colored ink; one square constellation of ruffled lines reminiscent of a Gothic chapel's floor plan steps from indigo to yellow. In another, rings of unerring green curls accent a hot pink page.

In 1963, Zazeela and Young moved into a TriBeCa apartment two blocks from Artists Space. On the third floor of their building is a 1993 iteration of their "[Dream House](#)," a public installation rigged with lavender light and a deep, droning raga — a total calligraphy.